The conditions in brief are:—

(a) The State Governments would be extended financial support to meet the interest liability to the extent of difference between the Coupon rate on the Bonds raised through additional market borrowings and 4% (the rate at which loan is being extended to the sugar mills).

(b) The State Governments would in turn, extend 10 year loan to the sugar mills with a ceiling interest rate of 4% per annum, this loan will have moratorium on repayment of principal and interest for a period of 5 years and would, thereafter, be repaid in 5 equal instalments.

(c) The above would be available to the mills in the cooperative and public sectors where the practice of announcing the State-Advised prices of sugarcane exists and all sugar mills in the States where no such practice exists.

(d) The extent of open market borrowings would be determined on the basis of sugarcane price arrears in a given State.

(e) Any additional benefit, which a State Government may wish to provide, would be to the charge of the State Government concerned.

(f) The State Governments would make specific proposals to the Ministry of Finance seeking permission for access to additional open market borrowings.

Indulgence of FPS in black marketing

217. SHRI TARIQ ANWAR: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Fair Price Shops meant for serving food grains to weaker sections of the society are indulging in black marketing;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) the action taken against guilty ones?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) to (c) In such a vast network of about 4.76 lakh

Fair Price Shops(FPS) throughout the country, there is a possibility of such instances occurrings. Under the Targetted Public Distribution System(EPDS), the supervision and monitoring the functioning of FPSs rests with the concerned State Governments/UTs. In order to strengthen the hands of the State Governments, the Public Distribution System (Control) Order, 2001 has been issued on 31st August, 2001 under section 3 of the Essential Commodities Act, 1955 with a view to curb willful adulteration, substitution, diversion etc. of the PDS commodities. An offence committee in violation of the provisions of the Order shall invoke criminal liability under the Act.

Decreasing number of vultures

†218. SHRIMATI KUM KUM RAI: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that the number of vultures in the country has been decreasing continuously;

(b) if so, the reasons therefor; and

(c) what steps are being taken to save this species?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI NAMO NARAIN MEENA):(a) A survey conducted by the Bombay Natural History Society under a special project sponsored in the year 2000 by the Ministry of Environment & Forests revealed that there has been more than 90 per cent decline in the populations of three species of vultures *viz*, White Backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed in many parts of the country.

(b) Post mortem and diagnostic tests have revealed that this drastic decline was due to consumption of the veterinary drug diclofenac by the vultures who fed on carcasses of livestock. Diclofenac causes deposition of uric acid in the visceral organs leading to sudden death.

(c) The steps taken by the Government of India to save vultures are as follows—

(i) Protection status of White backed, Long Billed and Slender Billed Vultures has been upgraded from schedule IV to Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.